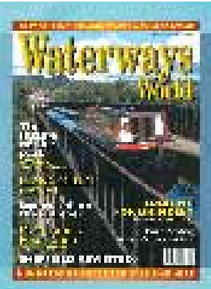
Waterways World



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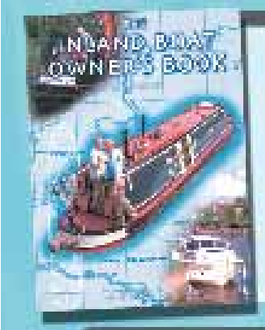

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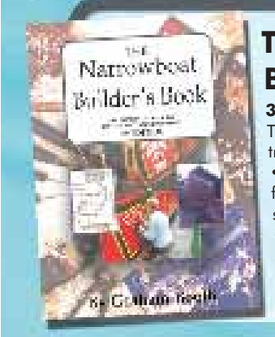

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3rd edition Graham Booth

The standard guide to every aspect of fitting out a traditionally-styled narrowboat:
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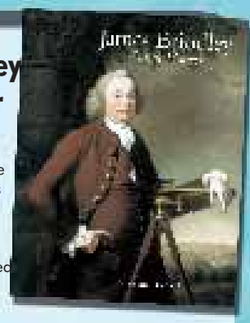
NEW

James Brindley - Canal Pioneer

Christine Richardson



This new biography is the result of the years of research into the life and times of James Brindley that have made Christine Richardson an acknowledged authority on her subject. The book corrects the many myths that have evolved around Brindley. As in all good biographies, it begins with his birth (in remote Derbyshire hills) and follows the sequence of events that shaped Brindley's life and career. Here we see the local millwright's apprentice develop into the nationally renowned engineer who created the pioneering canals that form the heart of the network we know today

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Your essential guide to the inland waterways of Britain available from newsagents or boatyards from 12th March. Packed with listings of boatyards, moorings, boat builders and much more

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SPRING/SUMMER 2004 ISSUE 8

waterfront

FOOD GLORIOUS FOOD!

We test out some floating eateries

THIS IS MY PATCH

The Grand Union Canal

SAFETY BACKLOG ELIMINATED

BW waves goodbye to the safety-related backlog of works

British Waterways

Frontlines

Spring/Summer 2004 Issue 8

A word from the editor

The biggest waterway event so far this year had to be at the London International Boat Show, which took place in January. The waterscape.com sponsored Inland Waterways Attraction filled a space of around ten tennis courts and was one of the major attractions for the 210,000 show visitors. Not only could you explore numerous narrowboats and river cruisers, but you also had the chance to stop off and refresh yourself at a very authentic waterside pub.

And if refreshing yourself and filling up is high on your agenda this summer, why not try a floating eatery. On pages 22-23 we've listed a few of the most colourful waterside places around the country where you can catch a bite to eat. With a choice ranging from Chinese to fish & chips, I'm sure there will be something to suit all tastes.

After a cold and snowy winter, spring is definitely in the air, and to tempt you outside onto the towpath we've selected our very best spring pictures in The Gallery on pages 14-15. And we can be assured now that the waterways are in an even safer condition, as BW has just eliminated its huge backlog of safety-related maintenance work. We look at this in more detail on pages 24-25, and highlight just some of the work that has been done this winter to make our waterways an even better place to visit.

Nicky Ross
Editor

Boat Licence holders will receive the following inserts in *Waterfront*:

- Nauticalia mail order catalogue 2003/04 (in some copies only)
- River Canal Rescue leaflet
- WOW, 'You can help children like Carl be good for the Waterways!'
- IWA Membership leaflet
- IWA Membership Gift Collection
- IWA Waterways Maps & Guides
- IWA Books for Boaters

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waterfront

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Front cover picture:
Hatton Locks, Grand Union Canal

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Up Front News in Brief

LICENCE FEE UPDATE

BW licence fees for April 2004 to March 2005 will rise by 2.5 per cent (rounded up or down to the nearest pound). The change in price was determined using the new price mechanism which reflects costs, while taking into account improvements in efficiencies. This index was developed after a 2002 consultation with user groups and was reviewed by OXERA, the independent economic consultants, prior to this increase.

BW LICENCE TERMS AND CONDITIONS

BW has made some small improvements to the licence terms & conditions, which came into effect 1 April 2004. Several of these changes have been made as a direct result of comments received from individuals and user groups over the last year.

The well publicised oversight relating to 8.4 (b) final sentence – 'you may only use the boat's engine to recharge batteries when the boat is underway' is one example where the conditions have changed, as this sentence has been deleted.

Full changes can be found at www.britishwaterways.co.uk/licence.

MOORING FEES REVIEW

BW's local service managers have reviewed BW's annual mooring prices using national guidelines. Any change to the current rate took effect from 1 April 2004. To give as much notice as possible of any price changes every customer should have received a letter, containing new price information, in the week commencing 5 January. The full price list is on www.waterscape.com/boating/moorings

EMERGENCY NUMBERS

BW's Freephone Canals number has changed to 0800 4799947. This number can be used from both mobile and land lines. Old numbers, which include dial 100 and ask for 'Freephone Canals' or 01384 240948 for mobile users, are no longer in operation.

BW'S WATERSIDE PUBS BUSINESS

BW has unveiled plans to launch a network of high quality waterside pubs. It says through this it will offer a greater choice and variety of pubs and that money spent in them will directly contribute back into the waterways. The Waterside Pub Partnership, as it is currently known, will develop sites alongside BW's canals and rivers as new waterside pubs, and improve the facilities and performance of some of its existing pubs.

BW is currently looking for a partner to help it do this, and expects one will be selected by summer 2004. Possible partners include existing pub companies, property companies and financial institutions.

The venture is expected to invest about £50 million over the first few years to develop and improve a possible 60 identified sites.

WATERWAYS OMBUDSMAN DECISIONS

The Waterways Ombudsman has recently ruled on three cases, on issues that may be of interest to boaters.

The first concerned BW's revision of mooring fees for 2003 and the way that this was applied. The complaint was from an association of boat owners in a major city which alleged that BW had not consulted with them, and that using market comparisons was not acceptable when setting mooring rates. Stephen Edell, the Waterways Ombudsman, did not find BW guilty of maladministration. This year, however, BW ensured that it provided information on 2004 mooring fees much earlier to boaters.

In another case, a boater complained that BW misled in its justification for the Trial Moorings Code when saying that the code was designed to be 'consistent with what the parliamentary draughtsman (of the 1995 Act) had in mind'. The Ombudsman did not find BW guilty of maladministration.

The final case regarded a 'business barge' – a boat used as an office. The complainant alleged that the barge did not have planning permission while at a temporary mooring and BW do not have powers to provide and use business barges. Mr Edell found BW not guilty of maladministration.

If you wish to make a complaint please visit www.britishwaterways.co.uk/complaints for more information, or contact your local BW office or BW's Customer Service Centre on 01923 201120.

DISPLAY YOUR LICENCE - YOU'VE GOT IT, SO FLAUNT IT!

Every year BW says it gratefully receives numerous calls from boaters about vessels that appear to be unlicensed, as they are not displaying a valid licence. Upon further research BW has discovered that many do actually have a licence, they're just not displaying them. The message BW wants to put across is simple - make sure you display your current licence. Failure to display a valid licence is a violation of BW's byelaws and can lead to legal action being taken.

BW is committed to tackling licence evasion, and will crack down on all boats not displaying a licence. So remember – display your licence today and help BW concentrate its efforts on the real licence evasion culprits.

If you do spot a vessel without a valid licence please call BW's Licence Evasion hotline number on 01923 201122.

BW WEBSITE

BW has just revamped its corporate website, www.britishwaterways.co.uk. "Waterscape.com is now the leisure facing site for British Waterways and it contains customer information on boating, including stoppages, dimensions, cruising times and moorings," says Nolan Gildersleve BW's website assistant. "The corporate website contains more information about BW, what we do, our recruitment opportunities and our press releases."

£10 OF GOODWILL

As mentioned in the last issue of *Waterfront*, BW will award a £10 goodwill gesture to all 12-month licence holders whose current licence expires between 30 April and 31July 2004, and was purchased after 15 March 2003.

The reason for the 'purchased after' bit is because any licence holder applying before this date already received a £15 discount as an incentive prior to BW's new computer system going live. This award will be made in the form of an automatic £10 reduction to the fee payable for the licence renewal.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS

Two of BW's offices have new addresses. They are:

South East Waterways
Ground Floor, Witan Gate House
500-600 Witan Gate
Central Milton Keynes
MK9 1BW
T: 01908 302500
F: 01908 302510

British Waterways London
1 Sheldon Square
Paddington Central
London W2 6TT
T: 020 7985 7200
F: 020 7985 7201
(from 10 May 2004)

CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

BW has updated its internal complaints procedure after consulting with organisations, local authorities, special interest user groups, canal societies, trusts and other bodies with a direct interest in BW's management of the canal and river network.

A new national consultative framework that is representative of all significant groups and bodies (and that will have elected committees with access to BW's Board and senior management) will be set up by autumn 2004, along with a reconstituted and updated Waterway Ombudsman scheme. There will also be a more streamlined and responsive complaints procedure and an improved procedure for direct consultation that will follow the Cabinet Office Code of Practice on written consultations.

The scheme will be publicised in each BW office and more information is available on www.britishwaterways.co.uk/complaints

BRITISH WATERWAYS MARINAS LIMITED

BW has set up a new wholly owned subsidiary. Ten of its marinas – Packet Boat, Priory, Hull, Sawley, Apsley, Kings, Ripon, Galgate, Bath and White Bear will now be part of British Waterways Marinas Limited (BWM Ltd). BW has written to moorers in the ten marinas advising them of the change.

BWM Ltd will operate independently and at arms length from BW, although the new company has set mooring fees for 2004/05 using the same principles as apply to BW's moorings.

BW WORK BOATS REVIEW

Over the next three to five years BW is planning to review its workboats in terms of use, need and heritage significance. The review is being undertaken in preparation for the introduction of new, specially designed modular craft offering greater flexibility, efficiency and innovative ways of working. All workboats will be inspected and assessed into one of four categories: heritage value, ongoing BW use, sale or auction and scrap.

The provenance of heritage boats will be researched by a team including representatives of BW, The Waterways Trust and the Historic Narrow Boat Owners Club. Any heritage craft that are not retained by BW will be offered free of charge to interested groups and organisations including waterway museums, voluntary groups, clubs, enthusiasts and canal societies. BW is committed to the future of these craft and any such transfer will be dependent on the prospective owner's ability to care for the boat.

NABO'S MESSAGE BOARD

The National Association of Boat Owners (NABO) has devised a novel way of keeping boaters up-to-date via the web with what's happening on the waterways.

Called 'Waterway Reporting Boards', the idea is for boaters, and any other interested party to post a message about a particular waterway and any issues associated with it. It's hoped that information on the boards will not only be useful to fellow boaters but will also be beneficial to navigation authorities in helping to identify problems at an early stage.

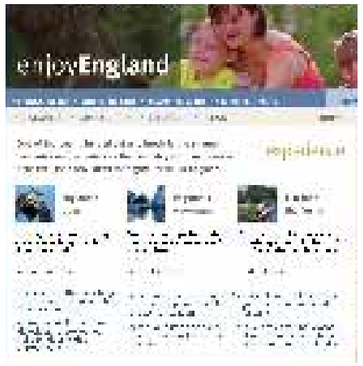
You don't have to be a member of NABO to take part and benefit from this useful scheme, but you do need a computer! So next time you notice something that you think it's worthwhile sharing with others, why not tell the world at www.nabo.org.uk/ww_reports/index

ENJOY ENGLAND IN 2004

Summer might seem like a long way off at the moment, but it's not too early to start planning your holiday. This year BW is a major partner in Visit Britain's 'Enjoy England' campaign designed to remind everyone of the delights of England as a great holiday and leisure destination.

The Visit England website, visitengland.com, features special links to waterscape.com to help people book waterway breaks or find out more about where to visit canals and rivers.

BW's involvement in the campaign supports its current drive to increase visitor numbers to the waterways and encourage them to explore and enjoy this hidden national treasure for themselves.
Other 'Enjoy England' partners include organisations such as The National Trust and English Heritage.



DOG DOS AND DON'TS

Encams, the environmental campaigner, estimates that 60 per cent of the dog owning public, that's 4.6 million adults, let their dogs foul in public open spaces. They say that one of the main reasons they don't clear up after their dog is the lack of a convenient and safe means of disposal. BW aims to put an end to this at popular waterside destinations by installing more dog bins.

Working in partnership with the Kennel Club, Oscar Pet Foods, JRB Enterprises and local authorities, BW is set to install 1000 new dog bins, many with free dog-waste bag dispensers, at popular waterway access points across the country.

Stewart Sim, BW's technical director, explains, "dog mess is one of our biggest customer complaints, so we've identified the most popular and problematic access points across our network to install dog bins, providing an important facility for our customers with dogs and helping to keep the waterways special for all."

As part of this campaign BW has produced a dog owner's leaflet with a map of visitor sites that have dog waste bins, pleasant walking routes, a pub or tea-room and nearby car parking. You can download a copy from www.waterscape.com/dogs.

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Call the Oscar Pet Foods Freephone helpline 0800 195 8000 or visit www.oscars.co.uk to find out about their complete pet care service. This service can be delivered to your house or your boat, and includes FREE food delivery, ongoing nutritional advice, tasty treats, health care products, microchipping, training aids, toys, pet insurance, and behavioural and veterinary back-up support.

See them near you or at national events such as Crufts and the Ideal Home Show.

OSCAR

COMPETITION

Waterfront has teamed up with Oscar Pet Foods, the free home delivered, healthy choice for dogs, to offer one lucky reader the chance to win a year's supply of pet food, and all entrants will receive a free poop-a-scoop. All you need to do is answer this simple question – How many new dog-waste bins is BW set to install? Send your answer in on a postcard with your name, address and telephone number to:
Waterfront Competition,
Oscar Pet Foods,
Bannister Hall Mill,
Higher Walton,
Preston PR5 4DB

THE BOATER'S HANDBOOK VIDEO

BW, along with Environment Agency and the RYA, has just completed a new film on how to enjoy the waterways safely when out boating.

Using the highly successful Boater's Handbook as the basis, the film follows two novice families as they take to the water for the first time. And while one family is quite clued up about the challenges they face, the other isn't quite so prepared, leading to a few wrong turns here and there.

Eugene Baston, customer relations manager and the film's producer says, "the film version of our handy booklet is designed to complement the book rather than replicate it. We were keen to show people enjoying themselves out on the waterways, with an emphasis on safety and adequate planning, rather than trying to cover the intricacies of different types of lock gear and the like."

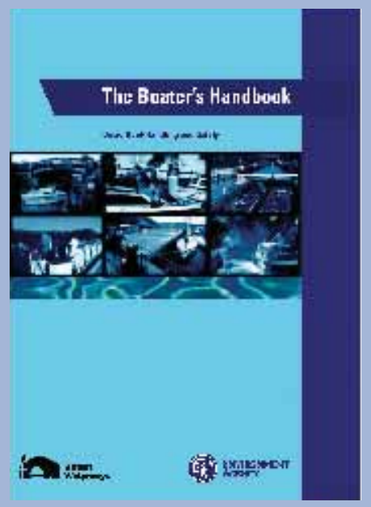
The film will be available in video and multi-media formats and will be provided to hire boat bases, timeshare companies and boat brokerages so that those who are new to boating can benefit from learning a bit about the 'rules of the road'.

TILLER TIPS

BW receives a healthy postbag of comments and suggestions from boaters all year round and BW has put together some useful tips that it would like to share with *Waterfront* readers.

- When finding a place to moor for the evening, think about others who may be arriving after you. Always moor close to other boats when on visitor moorings, and don't be afraid to ask others to move up to make room.

- Learn how to tie your mooring ropes correctly so that your boat doesn't move when others pass by. Of course, mooring on a river or section of canal where water levels fluctuate requires ropes to be left loose enough to accommodate water level changes.



- If you do want to overtake a boat in front of you, wait until the other skipper has signalled it's okay before passing at usual cruising speed to the left of the slower boat. If you're the boat being overtaken, slow down, to enable the manoeuvre to be completed more quickly and reduce the 'magnetic effect' caused when two boats are drawing the same water. And don't forget, if you really are taking your time cruising, do keep a look out behind you for boaters who may want to safely pass.

- When lock wheeling never lock-wheel more than one lock ahead – there may just be an unsuspecting boater coming in the other direction!

- When helping others with locks, always get the skipper's nod to put the top paddle up.

- If you're using a broad lock flight on your own, and can see a boat behind or in front doing the same, why not hang around for the other boat to catch up, or send a crew member to ask the other boat to wait for you to catch up? Water could be particularly precious this year if we have another dry summer.

- Helping other boaters when sharing locks is part of the fun, but always agree with the other crew who's doing what and when. This way you'll share the work and make new acquaintances, rather than cause uneasiness.

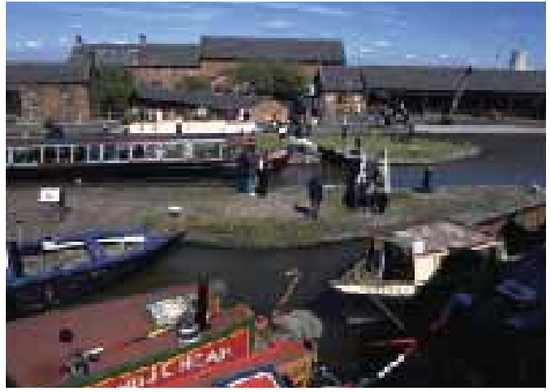
- When approaching a blind junction, it's always a good idea to have a crew member on the front of the boat to flag whether it's safe to turn or not.

- Do not tie up on lock bollards to have lunch even if it is only for five or ten minutes – others may want to use the lock landings.

- Always keep an eye on the boat if you're operating locks. Paying attention at all times may be the difference between becoming caught up or easily freeing your boat.

- Finally, don't forget, courtesy costs nothing, and is a very important element of the waterways experience.

For more practical tips for safe and harmonious boating, don't forget the Boater's Handbook. If you've lost your copy, contact BW Customer Service Centre on 01923 201120 for a replacement. They're free of charge to licence holders. Also see our letters page for a few more tips.



FACELIFT FOR ELLESMERE'S BOAT MUSEUM

The Boat Museum at Ellesmere Port, on the Shropshire Union Canal, is set to undergo a £1.3 million facelift later this year. Key buildings within the complex will be refurbished, and improvements to visitor facilities, including a new waterside café and visitor centre, an orientation centre and a passenger lift, will be made.

The majority of the funding has come thanks to a £901,000 grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund. The European Regional Development Fund and Waste Recycling Environmental Ltd will also provide funds, and at the time of writing this article, the outcome of a £358,000 funding application to the North West Development Agency was yet to be announced. Once funding is in place, work is expected to run from September 2004 to April 2005.

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TALK ABOUT BOATING...

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A VISITOR MOORING

We've all been there – you're opening the lock and your partner is steering the boat, you speak, shout and then hopelessly wave your hands around frantically, only to get a wave back... Familiar with this picture?

We found a few boaters that were, and spoke to them about their stories and how, thanks to the Motorola Talkabout™ two-way radios, these scenes are set to become a thing of the past.

James and Glenda Wain with Stella

WAIN'S WORLD

We firstly meet James and Glenda Wain and their dog, Stella, at Anderton visitor moorings on their boat Shackleton. They're just waking up and Glenda greets us with a cup of tea in one hand, and a walkie talkie in the other.

Where have you come from and where are you going?

"We've come from Runcorn, and have stopped here overnight," explains Glenda. "This morning we're heading to Marsden to see some friends."

I see you use walkie talkies, how do they help?

"I personally find that walkie talkies are useful when someone is at the lock and someone is steering," describes Glenda. "They're also really good when you're travelling in groups. We were in Cheshire last year travelling with another boat; there were four of us in all. They were really useful when we had to make important arrangements like which pub to stop off at! With a dog running around on the roof it's really important for them to be shock proof – like the Motorola one," laughs Glenda. "A lot of boaters have a four-legged friends, so you never know how many knocks it's going to take!"

NOAH'S ARK

A short walk along the towpath and we meet Sue and Steve who are with their children Lee and Nicky, their dogs Zena and Nellie and their African Grey parrot, Pierre. Together, on their narrowboat, Mersey Weaver, they certainly seem like a modern day Noah's Ark.

How long have you been boating?

"We've had our boat for four years. I started boating when my daughter Nicky was two years old and have been hooked ever since," says Sue. "Boating is great. While I do one lock, my son Lee usually runs and does another lock," says Sue. "Having walkie talkies to speak to each other makes it that much easier."

How do you find your walkie talkies?

"Unlike a mobile phone you don't have to pay for calls, so you save money," explains Sue. "It's hard to get a signal in a boat because the shell blocks it, you're constantly propping up a mobile in the port-hole. With a walkie talkie it's great because you don't need the signal."

COUNTESS OF THE WATERWAYS

We next take a short walk down to Anderton Marina where we meet June Watts, who owns Countess along with her husband Adrian and their dog Tara.

How did you get into boating?

"I was actually born on a narrowboat," says June, "my dad worked on the waterways. Boating is fantastic, but at times you can feel a bit vulnerable, for example when kids hang around the boat." That's where the two-way radios come into their own. "I've used the walkie talkie to get Adrian to come back to the boat, and the kids usually leave," explains June, "you just feel it's that bit of extra security."

How do you find communicating onboard?

"The engine can be really noisy sometimes so it can be hard to hear," says June. "When Adrian's steering and I'm at the front of the boat I use the walkie talkie to tell him where to stop, or he'll use it to tell me to put the kettle on!"

TEA ON TEA-PEE

Over the other side of the marina we meet Silvia and Robert Evans on their boat Tea-pee which they've had for just ten weeks.

Your boat looks brand new, is it?

"It is," declares Silvia, "we got our boat from Stirling Narrowboats at the end of November. We're off to our home town, Middlewich, next week to show it off. We've just retired so we plan to travel around on the boat, it will be great not knowing what's round the corner."

How will your walkie talkies help you on your journey?

"My husband's a little deaf," explains Silvia, "so he can't hear too well when I shout that the dinner's ready or that there's a pub ahead, that's when the walkie talkies are really handy."

l-r June Watts and Silvia Evans

WILLIAMS TELLS

We next move to Red Bull visitor moorings where we meet Roger Williams who lives on his narrowboat, Pedpha, which he's had for two months.

Where are you travelling?

"I've travelled from Longport, through Harecastle Tunnel, to get here today," says Roger. "It's a little bit hairy at times as you can't see a thing and I'd definitely recommend a hat as it can get quite wet."

How do you use walkie talkies travelling alone?

"For the next few days I'm travelling with a friend on another boat," explains Roger. "I don't really use walkie talkies for chit chat, I use them to pass on information like if there are hazards or mooring spaces ahead. I also like the fact that these Motorola ones are water-resistant," laughs Roger, "it especially helps when passing through long tunnels!"

l-r Lee, Nicky, Sue and Steve

THE JACKSON TWO

We finally meet Paul Jackson and son Jake also at Red Bull on their narrowboat Harmony.

How long have you been boating?

"I've been boating for 15 years now," says Paul. "I first got interested when there was a big garden festival featuring inland waterways at Etruria."

How do you use your walkie talkies?

"I'm travelling down to Birmingham," explains Paul. "The engine can be very noisy onboard and you lose your voice shouting, they certainly save your voice. It's also good that you can charge the batteries up on the Motorola ones, I've had some in the past that cost me a fortune in batteries! I also find them useful when Jake is onboard and we moor up," explains Paul. "Jake always wants to go off and explore I don't need to worry so much if he's got a walkie talkie, there's always a way to contact him within a two-mile radius, so it's good for both of us."

So all in all we conclude that the new Motorola Talkabout™ T5422 two-way radio is the must-have accessory for the next boating season!

Package includes
2 X T5422 RADIOS
2 X RECHARGEABLE BATTERIES
1 X DUAL CHARGER
2 X BELT CLIPS

ALL FOR ONLY £59.99

MOTOROLA
intelligence everywhere™

WATERWAY to spend a day

Signwriting, one of many demonstrations at waterway festivals

Trip boats prove very popular with many visitors

What better way to spend a day or two than by visiting one of the many boat shows and events that will be taking place across the country throughout the spring and summer months. Shows and events are a really good way to gather information about what's going on around the waterway network, as well as a fantastic opportunity to pick up some real bargains, do some research on new boats and accessories or simply soak up the atmosphere and enjoy the entertainment.

There are hundreds of festivals, shows, rallies and cavalcades to visit. Waterscape.com have a full list of events that's regularly updated. Here we look at three major events.

CRICK BOAT SHOW

Crick Boat Show, the Inland Boat and Country Show, attracted over 28,000 visitors. Organised by BW, this year's show runs from 29-31 May and is expanding, so there's going to be more of everything. More stalls, more exhibition stands, and more attractions, including a bigger and better land based marina which means more boats to look at. In fact there are hundreds of exhibitors so you're bound to find something to interest you.

One of last year's most popular attractions was the chance to get afloat on a free boat trip supported by Canal Boat & Inland Waterway Magazine, along with volunteers from Crick Marina and BW.

This year there'll be a more varied fleet of craft to choose from, but book your free place as soon as you arrive to avoid disappointment. Crick promises fun for younger visitors to the show too. Every child who enters the show site can join the fun with WOW and have a go at loads of exciting activities from tunnel lantern making to mad and messy arts and crafts workshops! And if entertainment is what you are after then Crick comes alive at night. On both Saturday and Sunday evening live bands will be performing for free and the real-ale bar featuring many local brews will be open until late. Crick Marina is just five minutes from the M1 junction 18 and has plenty of free parking.

Further information is available from www.crickboatshow.co.uk or by phoning 01788 891555. Tickets are available in advance from 01788 534970

THE NATIONAL WATERWAYS FESTIVAL

Another major date in the inland waterway events diary is the roaming National Waterways Festival. Every August Bank Holiday a different site around the network plays host to this major boating event. The Festival is organised by, and raises money for, the Inland Waterways Association, the charity which campaigns for the conservation, use, maintenance, restoration and sensitive development of Britain's canals and rivers.

This summer the festival will be taking place at Burton-upon-Trent, on the Trent & Mersey Canal, from the 28-30 August. Plenty of boaters will be travelling along the system to the site and BW Central Shires Waterway has told *Waterfront* that BW people will be on-site a week either side of the event to help with the manoeuvring of boats into the site and through the locks. There'll be over 200 exhibitors selling everything from fixtures and fittings right through to insurance and antiques. This, along with over 600 boats, makes for a vibrant and varied weekend on the water.

A major attraction of the 'National' is the range of waterway arts and canal crafts on offer. Back by popular demand are the craft workshops, which include; crochet, painting and sign writing as well as DIY focussed engine workshops.

Apart from being entertained, the festival is a great opportunity to find out about what canal societies and organisations from around the country have been up to. This year there will be over 20 extensive displays from a variety of canal restoration associations and there will be special support for two local restoration schemes, the Lichfield & Hatherton canals and the Derby & Sandiacre Canal. In addition to all these water-related attractions there'll be a vintage vehicle section, cookery demonstrations, bands and theatre to keep you entertained throughout the festival. It's bound to be busy so book your tickets in advance by calling the ticket hotline 0870 240 2438 or for more information visit www.waterways.org.uk/festivals

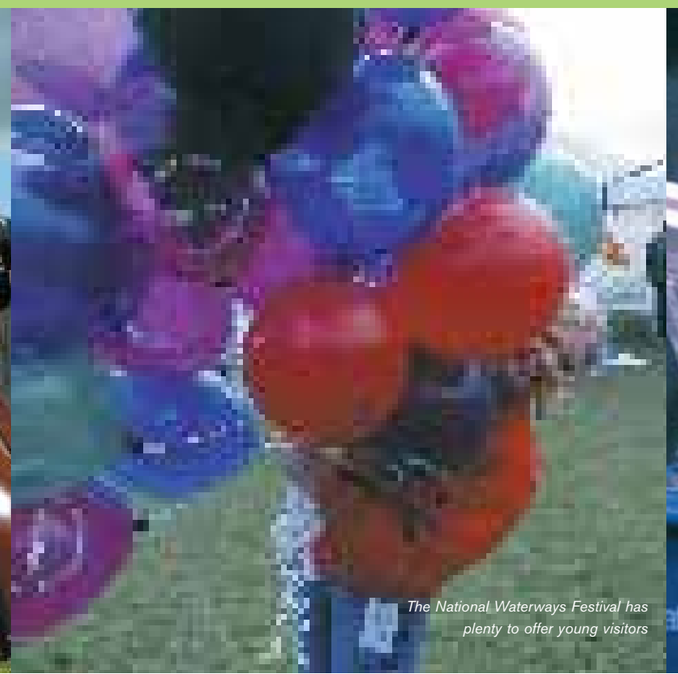
LONDON BOAT SHOW

Planning ahead is sometimes necessary when travelling along the canals, whether it's to find out if there's a stoppage or if you need to book ahead for a locking. So its worth mentioning that the London Boat Show from 6-16 January 2005 should be part of your plans and marked in your diary!

The Schroders International London Boat Show this year was the largest exhibition to have ever been held in London, and the 2005 show promises to be just as good. This year's show attracted over 210,000 visitors at its new site of ExCel, London Docklands. Absolutely everything water-related was there; from sailing holidays in the Mediterranean to indoor windsurfing, with dinghies, narrowboats, cruisers and yachts on display, navy frigates and tall ships to explore and engines, books and bedding for boats available to purchase.

This year saw the new inland waterways feature, sponsored by waterscape.com, introduced to the boat show. Within the landscaped feature was a real-life pub, along with a presence from all three major navigation authorities, BW, the Environment Agency and the Broads Authority who brought their solar powered boat 'Ra', as well as associations, stalls and the Boat Safety Scheme. More information about the 2005 show will be available closer to the date, but you can check for information on www.waterscape.com.

The Bill Bailey band that were at Crick last year


The National Waterways Festival has plenty to offer young visitors

Waterscape.com terminals were available at the London Boat Show

JUST ASK...
About Restoration

As Regeneration Manager, Andrew Stumpf is responsible for restorations in the South of England. Andrew came to BW straight from college, where he trained as a naval architect. He was initially part of the planning team looking at improving the carrying capacity of existing commercial waterways. He moved on to become waterway manager for the Gloucester and River Severn waterways, and then moved to the same role in the Midlands. In 1999 he joined the BW Scotland team, where he was responsible for the operational aspects of the Scottish canals. It's here where he became heavily involved in restoration work. The Millennium Link, the restoration project to reopen the Forth & Clyde and Union canals, was well underway, and Andrew became a crucial member of the team. *Waterfront*'s Zoë Hughes asked him about restorations, including what plans BW has for the future.

How do restorations start?
Normally they start many years before we get involved, often with energetic individuals who have the vision of what could be. Securing protection for that vision in local plans is then absolutely vital.

Where BW can help is to broaden the vision beyond navigation restoration and to link that vision with the aims and objectives of potential funding bodies. And we have a huge amount of experience, knowledge and expertise. But this would of course be worthless without the enthusiasm and commitment of the local people and agencies.

How do you work out how much the project costs?
There's not a simple answer to this, as every project is very different, but we're always talking millions. The largest area of cost is normally the engineering – how we overcome the physical challenges. We have to be very careful to build in allowances for the unknowns, for example hidden contamination or service crossings, as well as the known, for example archaeological investigations and recording or the protection of existing and creation of new wildlife habitats. We must also consider how people can participate in the restoration and how they will use the waterway once it is complete. Education, training, interpretation, monitoring and evaluation are now essential parts of the package.

Underpinning all of this is the considerable amount of research required to identify the value of what is there now and to forecast the benefits that will follow restoration.

How and where do you get the funds?
Funds always come from a wide range of sources – large and small. Some of the most important funding that is from local people, through voluntary groups and from local agencies. Local funding is extremely important as it demonstrates to others, particularly the big national funding bodies, that the scheme has strong local backing and is a priority for the immediate communities.

Public funding is vital as it can secure you the huge amounts necessary, although this area is becoming increasingly competitive with more people bidding, and bidding very professionally, for reduced pots of money.

And let's not forget the role The Waterways Trust plays in winning sponsorship from public appeals (like the Anderton Boat Lift Appeal) and the funding raised from all the other charitable trusts. Private funding can play a part, particularly through adjacent property development.

How many people normally get involved in a restoration project?
It all depends on the scale of the project, but there are many specialists involved in every project but it is not the number but the range of disciplines that is important.

Expertise will include environmental, conservation, interpretation, tourism development and visitor management, water management, commercial and project management and financial skills to ensure tax efficient use of funds available. Luckily within BW we have the range of skills combined with our experience of successful restoration projects.

St. Cyrs Church on the Cotswold Canals

How long does a restoration take?
Again, that all depends on the scale of the project. From start to finish? Many have already 30 or more years of history behind them. In recent years, with some very large pots of money such as the Millennium Commission, we have seen very rapid progress. In the future I think we will again see restorations making steadier progress.

Why do we restore canals and not just look after what we've got?
Where the canals are already ours clearly we are creating an asset from what has often been a liability. With third party canals we are offering our experience and expertise but that cannot be at the expense of our existing canals and users. We concentrate on those waterways having a strategic benefit for the network as a whole.

What projects are you working on at the moment?
Currently there are three major projects in the South – restoring the Cotswold Canals and the Droitwich Canals and building the brand new Bedford & Milton Keynes Waterways.

Tell me more about the Cotswold Canals?
It would once again, link the rivers Thames and Severn, bringing two of England's most picturesque inland waterways back to life. The project has been broken down into manageable phases. Last year bids were submitted for the first phase of the project, the conservation-led £40 million restoration of the 7-mile Stroudwater Navigation, from Saul Junction to Stroud, and a 2½-mile stretch of the Thames & Severn Canal from Stroud to Brimscombe.

At the moment we don't have the funds to start. The Heritage Lottery Fund announced in January 2004 that they had deferred their decision for a grant for this phase and they've asked us to submit a scaled down bid for consideration in July.

And also the Droitwich Canals?
It will provide a new 7½-mile waterway, linking the River Severn and the Worcester & Birmingham Canal and creating a unique 21-mile waterway cruising ring. It is set to contribute substantially to the regeneration of Droitwich town centre through tourism and identified residential and commercial developments. The project is due to be completed 2008 with working starting in late 2004.

What's happening with the Bedford & Milton Keynes Waterway?
This is to be a new waterway linking the Grand Union Canal in Milton Keynes to the River Great Ouse in Bedford. The link would make the waterways of East Anglia much more accessible. BW started working with Bedford & Milton Keynes Waterway Trust in 2001 and after setting up a partnership, we undertook a feasibility report. This gave us nine different routes, which took to public consultation. In February 2003 we released the preferred route and we've been working since then to secure it in local plans.

If someone wants to find out more information about particular restorations, where do they go?
I would say the website is the best place to start, but if you haven't got access then you could call our Customer Service Centre on 01923 201120 and ask them to print the information and post it to you.

www.britishwaterways.co.uk/cotswolds
www.britishwaterways.co.uk/droitwich
www.britishwaterways.co.uk/bmk

the gallery

spring waterway scenes

Daffodils

I wandered lonely as a cloud

That floats on high o'er vales and hills,

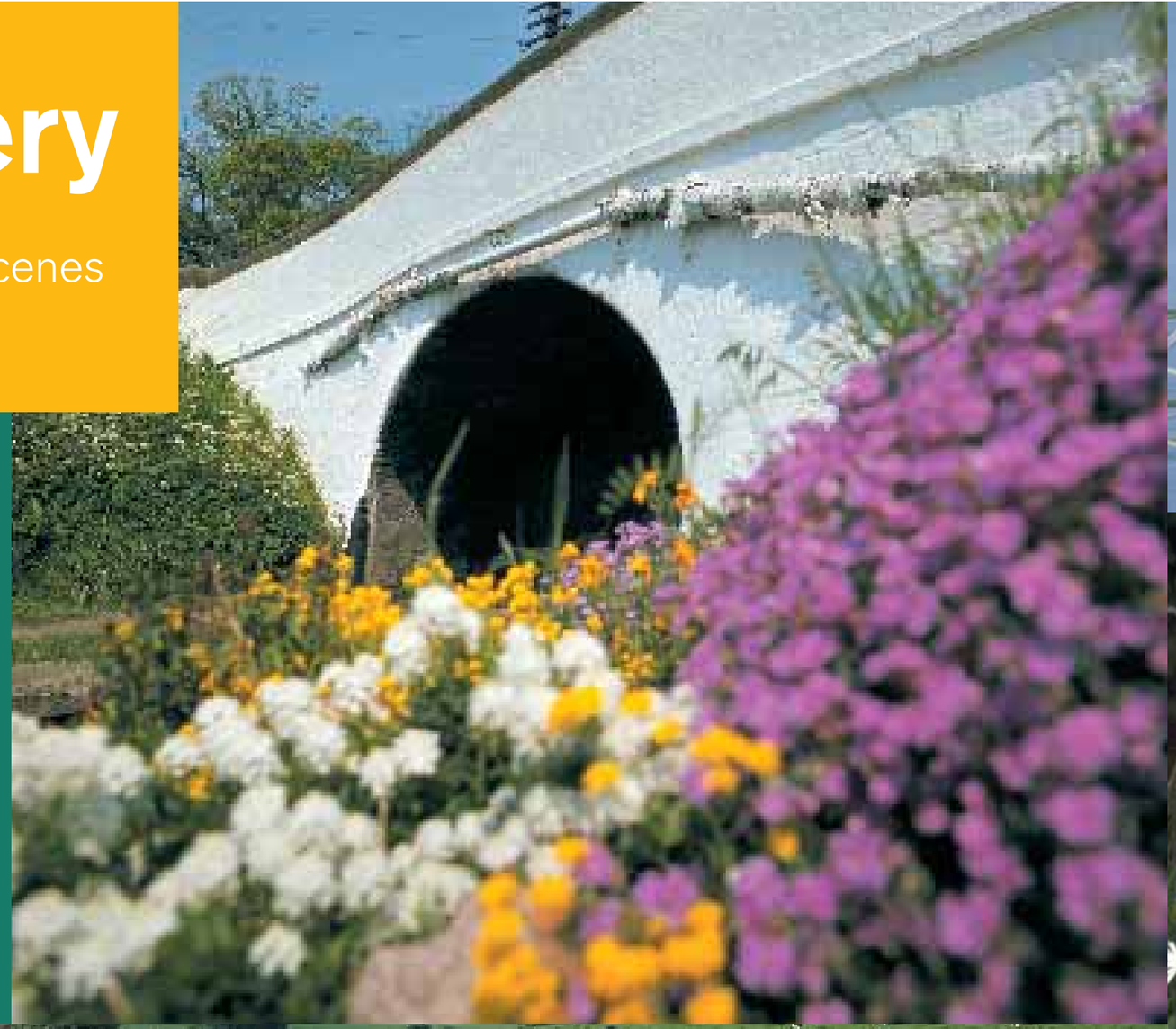
When all at once I saw a crowd,

A host, of golden daffodils;

Beside the lake, beneath the trees,

Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

An extract from William Wordsworth's poem Daffodils



Daffodils was written by William Wordsworth in 1804. And this year is its bicentennial and to celebrate the Wordsworth Trust and Marie Curie Cancer Care have organised the world's biggest poetry read. Thousands of schools across the UK took part, with over ¼ million school children reading simultaneously on 19 March.

For more information about Wordsworth and his poems visit www.wordsworthtrust.org.uk

LEEDS

Centred around the junction of the Leeds & Liverpool Canal and the Aire & Calder Navigation, Leeds is the UK's second largest metropolitan district, stretching 15 miles from east to west, and 13 miles from north to south.

All black and white pictures are courtesy of The Waterways Trust/BW Archive.

The city of Leeds is a huge success story. It was voted Visitor City of the Year in the Good Britain Guide 2004, and Favourite UK City by readers of the Conde Nast Traveller, which is the UK's leading magazine for independent travellers. And if you still need convincing…Harvey Nichols, shopping haunt of the rich and famous, chose Leeds as the best place to open its first department store outside London in 1996 (there are now a total of five throughout the UK). Absolute proof that Leeds has hit the big time!

The history of Leeds dates as far back as 731AD when Bede's 'History of English Church and People' mentioned Leeds (then Loidis) Parish Church. However the core of the modern city of Leeds that we know was created in 1684 thanks to its successful cloth market. The population trebled, increasing from 10,000 to 30,000 between 1700 and 1800. The incredibly by 1840, once the industrial revolution took hold, the population had reached over 150,000. Leeds became one of the most prosperous towns in the north of England, and the Aire & Calder Navigation, along with the Leeds & Liverpool Canal, made it the heart of a thriving communications network as well as a hugely successful manufacturing centre.

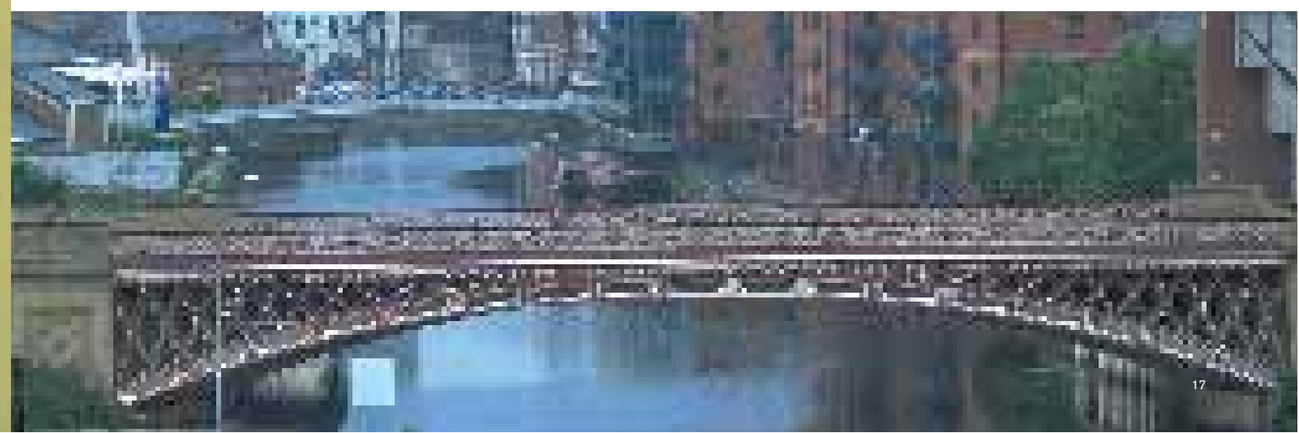
Created when the rivers Aire & Calder were made navigable in 1699, the Aire & Calder Navigation linked Leeds with the rivers Ouse and Humber, and also with the sea. Now, more than 300 years later, it is still busy with freight, carrying more than two million tonnes of oil, sand and gravel each year on vessels capable of carrying 700 tonnes (that's the equivalent of 117 elephants or more at a time).
The completion of the 127-mile long Leeds & Liverpool Canal, in 1816, meant the completion of a coast to coast route between the Irish Sea and the North Sea, with Leeds ideally positioned to benefit from it.

Leeds is the UK's fastest growing city and has a population of over 700,000. It is also the birthplace of many famous household names, including Marks & Spencer, which began when Michael Marks opened up a penny bazaar in Leeds Market, board game manufacturers Waddington's and Chippendale furniture. There are 200 parks and open spaces, as well as a host of exciting visitor attractions, including The Royal Armouries, voted 'Specialist Museum of the Year' by the Good Britain Guide 2004. Situated right alongside the Aire & Calder Navigation in Clarence Dock, the museum opened in 1996 and houses Britain's national collection of arms and armour. Attractions include Henry VIII's tournament armour and outdoor falconry and jousting demonstrations.

Situated close to the towpath in the Armley Mills area, Leeds Industrial Museum is an excellent port of call for anyone interested in the city's industrial past, and includes restored woollen machinery, replica sweat shops and a coal mine. Also on the waterside, and certainly worth a visit, is Thwaite Mill, in Stourton. Just two miles from the city centre, this is a fascinating, fully restored working water mill with over 300 years of history.

But it has to be Leeds waterfront that is the most exciting, thriving and vibrant part of the city, thanks to the redevelopment of once derelict brownfield land, a process which began in the mid-1980s. Plans for the latest £120 million phase of the redevelopment, at Clarence Dock, include numerous bars, restaurants and shops, apartments, parking for 1,800 cars, office space, and plans are also being considered for a health club, a casino and a hotel.

The 'London of the North' has so much to offer – its shops, bars, cafes, restaurants, museums, hotels and theatres rival any in the capital, and its long and colourful history is there to be explored. Visit the Leeds City Council website www.leeds.gov.uk, for more information on this fascinating city, including places to stay, places to go, and a whole lot more.



THE HISTORIC NARROW BOAT OWNERS CLUB

If your heart stirs to the throb of a Bolinder engine or if you feel a pang of nostalgia at the sight of a traditional motor and butty chugging past on the canal, the Historic Narrow Boat Owners Club (HNBOC) might appeal to you.

Founded in 1966, the HNBOC aims to encourage the preservation and use of working narrowboats and many members are the proud owners of beautifully restored craft.

To be eligible as a full member of the HNBOC, you must be the owner of a narrowboat with a trading background built before 1965. However, associate membership of the club is a popular option for many people who do not own a boat of their own, but care passionately about the history of the waterways and the craft that plied their trade along them.

The club was established nearly 40 years ago at the annual Inland Waterways Association National Rally at Marple. The event campaigned for the reopening of the then derelict Marple Locks on the Peak Forest Canal and many people attending the rally by boat had experienced difficulties in reaching Marple because of the generally poor condition of the canals at that time.

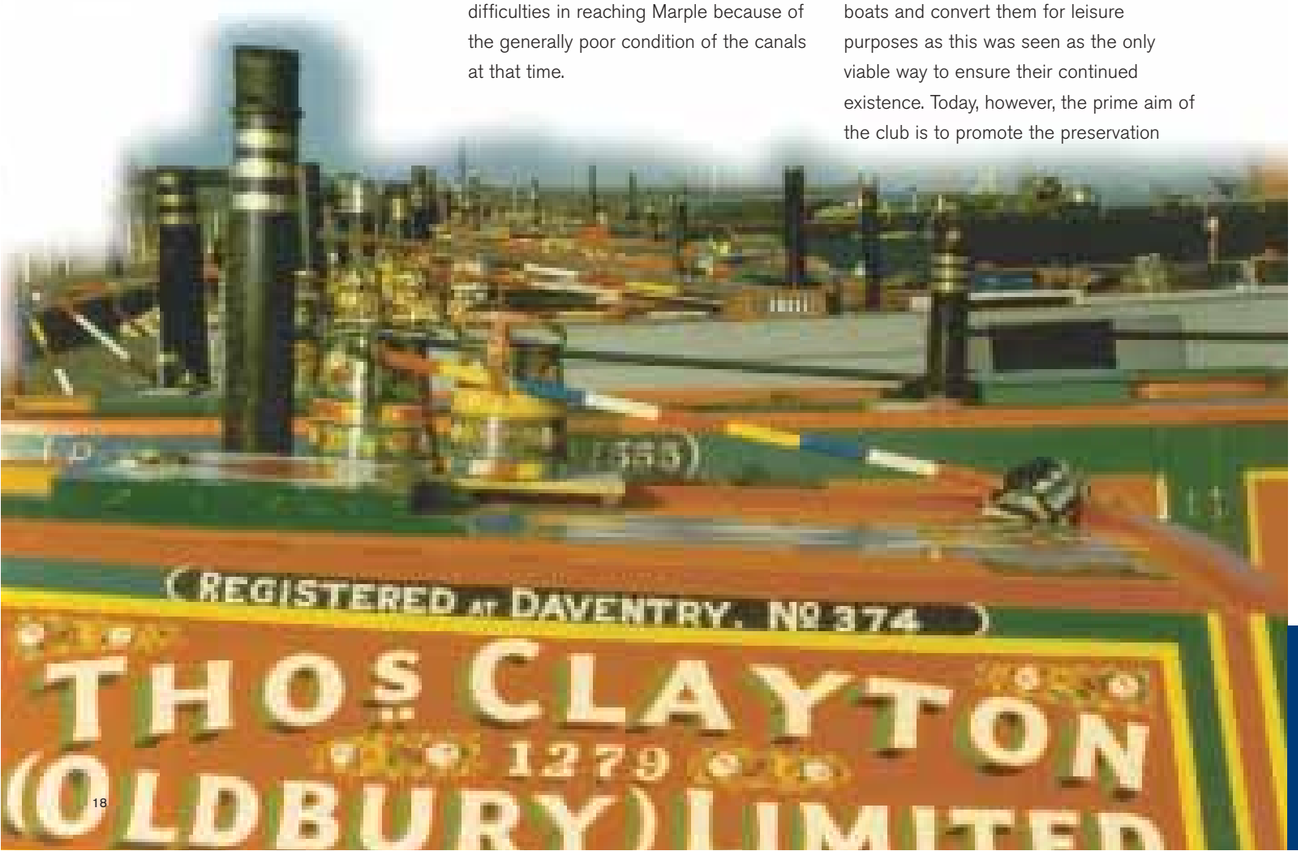
A further concern for rally-goers was the high number of derelict traditional working boats they had seen abandoned and rotting during the course of their journey.

The Cyprus meeting

Back in 1966 it was becoming increasingly clear that the great days of commercial freight carriage on the waterways were numbered and that the future for these interesting boats was bleak.

It was decided that something must be done and the first meeting of the HNBOC took place during the Marple Rally onboard a boat called Cyprus. (Interestingly, this craft was actually named after the tree, but at some point in its past a gremlin had crept into the signwriter's paint bucket and cypress had morphed into the island!)

Initially it was decided that the club should encourage people to buy up old working boats and convert them for leisure purposes as this was seen as the only viable way to ensure their continued existence. Today, however, the prime aim of the club is to promote the preservation and maintenance of working boats and no distinction is made between traditional boats converted for leisure use and those that remain as working boats.



Club Secretary Richard Booth says, "we are happy to welcome any traditional working boat, whether converted or not, as long as it was once a true carrying boat dating from before 1965."

Currently the owner of three boats, 'Dane' a wooden motor dating from 1907, 'Ditton' a butty dating from 1936 and 'Squire' a joey boat dating from 1896, Richard first became interested in leisure boating on the waterways in the 1970s.

"Through that I became more interested in the old boats and particularly the carrying boats as a part of waterway history," he explains, adding, "I think that's really the way most people become involved."

Nostalgia

He thinks that nostalgia is very much part of the appeal, "although I don't have any personal memories of canal carrying – other than the lime juice traffic that continued for a while – I think there is something very special about these boats.

"The vast majority of club members would say that we are preserving an aspect of waterway heritage, not just for us but for future generations. We all feel that we are playing our part to protect something of the working legacy of the canals and see the boats as being as much a part of that legacy as the canals themselves.

"These boats bring into focus the way the canals actually work and make sense of their historic furniture and landscape. I think we all feel that the waterways are definitely poorer places without them."

Join the club!

Members of the HNBOC are encouraged to participate in waterway events where historic boats are the focus of attention, including the Easter gathering at Ellesmere Port, the Etruria Canal Festival, the Braunston Historic Boat Gathering and the IWA National Rally. In addition the club organises two major social events each year around its Annual General Meeting in March and a second event in autumn.

Along with a chance to meet up with other historic narrowboat owners, the events attract experts and key speakers from the world of waterways. BW's chief executive Robin Evans attended the club's autumn meeting last year.

Regular newsletters also keep members informed and in touch.

If you would like more information about the HNBOC or would like to become a member or associate member send a stamped and self-addressed envelope with a short covering letter to:
Richard Booth,
HNBOC,
1 Vicarage Road,
Marsworth, Tring,
HP23 4LR
or email: secretary@hnboc.org.uk

Alternatively you can visit the club's website at www.hnboc.org.uk to download a membership application form.

THIS IS MY PATCH – THE GRAND UNION CANAL

The Grand Union Canal is Britain's longest canal. Running for 137 miles up and down the country it provides a waterway link between the River Trent and the River Thames, and crucially in the days of heavy freight movement between Birmingham and London's docks. *Waterfront*'s Gill Owen went to meet Mick Wong and discover a little bit more about him and his 'patch' on the Grand Union Canal.

Acting team leader, Mick Wong, works on the northern section of the Grand Union Canal from Lincoln Road Bridge (No. 85) to Napton Junction and is based at Hatton, near Warwick.

Mick has been working for BW for just five years. He started off as a multi-skilled waterway operative and recently he's been seconded to the role of team leader, taking on far more of the operational management of the canal, as well as working out on the bank.

According to Mick this is a special bit of the network, "Hatton is a really pretty area and the lock flight is a fantastic piece of engineering. It's also a good place for new visitors to discover the canals, there's always events going on, such as nature walks, and most of the Hatton site is accessible for everyone."

The area is steeped in history too. Mick tells me that the Hatton Lock Flight originally looked a lot different to its present state. In 1929 the Grand Union Canal was formed when the eight canal companies who owned the canals linking Birmingham to London were amalgamated into one, this intended to reinvigorate the canals. Locks were widened, bridges rebuilt and wharves established. As part of the scheme the 21 Hatton Locks were all widened from narrow locks to become broad locks, allowing two boats to travel side by side through the flight. If you look carefully at the quoins, the vertical pieces of iron against which the lock gates sit, then you can see the date that they were replaced.

I asked Mick about boating on this section. "This is a great section, full of contrast," he explains. "You can travel down from the hustle and bustle of Birmingham and then find yourself in beautiful countryside. I'd suggest that you stop at one of the villages along the way. Knowle is a good place to moor-up and have a wander, it's got a good range of shops and restaurants, or you could carry on south, passing the Black Boy pub on the canalside."

If you are travelling south then your next stop should be Hatton. A good idea is to stop and have a look around the area before you tackle the locks, as you can't moor-up inside the lock pounds. The old working-horses stable has recently been converted into a canalside café and shop. Sheila Lambert, who manages the café told me: "We welcome everyone whether you've got muddy boots, a bike or even a dog, and the café has a ramp so it's easy for wheelchairs and pushchairs. We're open all year round for people to come in, even if it's just to have a look at the original features that have been maintained." You can still see the cobbled flooring through special perspex flooring and even the tethering rings from the horses stalls remain. If heritage is your thing, you'll enjoy reading the interpretation boards at Hatton Locks to discover a bit more about the canal's history.

Another recommendation from Mick is just a short walk from the towpath at Hatton, "Hatton Farm Village is a great place to take children. There's an indoor play area, a rare breeds farm, a guinea pig village and a maze to distract them for a few hours. Then you can just stroll back down to the towpath and your boat." Moving on south from Hatton you'll be travelling towards the historic spa town of Royal Leamington Spa and the medieval castle town of Warwick. Both of these towns have plenty of sites to discover and could easily take a day or two to fully explore. "The villages of Stockton, Bascote, Napton and Long Itchington all have very nice canalside pubs to stop off at as well," says Mick.

But this patch of the Grand Union Canal also has smaller unique sites to discover, especially if you enjoy the natural canalside environment. Mick told me, "I often spot kingfishers around the flight at Knowle, and in the spring there are always foxes and pheasants to see. On our patch there's a Special Site of Scientific Interest (SSSI) at Shrewley Canal Cutting – it's a very important geological area. You can walk through part of the tunnel, and then look at the rock formation of the cutting – you can see all of the layers of the rock. It's a beautiful spot on the canal that's very different to the more obvious attractions in this area."

The 36 miles or so that form Mick's patch is definitely worth a visit. The contrasting scenery from busy towns and cities through to the secluded canalside spots means that there really is something for everyone, and as Mick explains, "When the team is at full strength there are about 13 of us looking after this patch. It's a great team to work with, there's a real combination of skills and ages too. They are all very friendly and approachable, so if anyone does see us out and about on the towpath don't hesitate to say hello or ask us any questions."

For more information about Hatton and the Grand Union Canal please contact the Central Shires Waterway on 01827 252000 or visit www.waterscape.com to find out more about the area.

Mike Wong helping a customer at Hatton Locks

"Hatton is a really pretty area and the lock flight is a fantastic piece of engineering."

FOOD GLORIOUS FOOD!

The abundance of cafes, restaurants and pubs around our canals and rivers are sure to satisfy cravings if you're feeling a bit peckish. We have hit the water and tried and tested a few floating restaurants to see what culinary delicacies lie onboard.

Restaurant: Rosamund the Fair
Cuisine: Modern British
Price Range: ££££
Vegetarian Available: Yes, but specify when booking
Address: Tooley's Boatyard, (Oxford Canal), Spiceball Park Road, Banbury, OX16 2PQ
T: +44 (0) 1295 278690

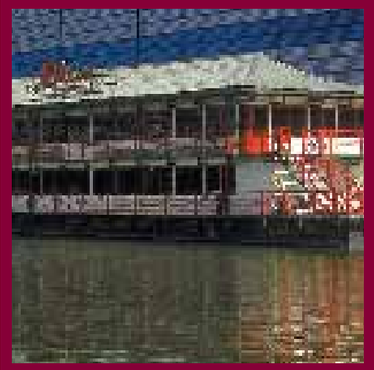
If you are looking for something special, a birthday or anniversary, then the 'Rosamund the Fair', a purpose built narrowboat restaurant, is definitely a good option. The cruise takes you along the Oxford Canal in and around Banbury, and if you don't get bored of the views the food is a good distraction.

After settling onboard we had a quick safety talk before setting off and letting the feast begin! The menu is all prepared onboard by Chef Tom Kirby. To start I had amuse-gueule, which means throat-tickler, and freshly baked bread. I selected a roll with poppy seeds and was pleasantly surprised to find pine nut kernels inside, delicious.

I opted for mango, avocado and pawpaw tian with a lime and yoghurt dressing, which was very refreshing and lovely for a summer's day. This was followed by fillet of red mullet with cassava chips and mango salsa, the healthy option. However I let myself go when came their speciality the swan-shaped profiterole covered with a rich hot chocolate sauce, although I did feel a bit guilty eating the head, as some signets swam past!

The meal and cruise costs £52 per person. They have a very good selection of wine onboard, but it doesn't come cheap. I had the Sancerre, which was £11.95 for a half bottle. The boat is very popular, so booking in advance is a must.

Restaurant: The Lotus
Cuisine: Chinese including Canton, Szechuan and Peking dishes
Price Range: £££
Vegetarian Available: Plenty
Address: The Lotus Chinese Floating Restaurant, 38 Limeharbour, Inner Millwall Docks, London. E14 9RH
T: +44 (0) 20 7515 6445



You definitely can't miss the Lotus restaurant; it claims to be the largest floating restaurant in London. Less than two minutes walk from Crossharbour Station, the Lotus is moored behind the London Arena and it's been known to host post-concert parties.

You can choose from a variety of menus, including a lunchtime buffet, various set menus and a dim sum menu. The choice of dishes is astounding, and includes all the old favourites but with special extras, such as 'jelly fish with chicken' and 'braised duck with monk's vegetables'.

We opted for a set menu for two that consisted of four courses for £25.50 per person. A platter of hors d'oeuvres started our meal, this was then followed by soup and a very tasty crispy duck with pancakes. For our main course we chose fried prawns in szechuan sauce, which more than lived up to it's description as 'hot to taste', sizzling beef, and the more unusual shredded pork with Chinese pickles. This more adventurous dish was a real culinary surprise that we'd definitely recommend.

The Lotus also offers an extensive wine list, and there's also a bar. We'd recommend booking a table here as the night we visited was very busy.

If you're looking for a different location for a special party, the Lotus is the place to go. It can cater for up to 500 guests and has hosted Chinese themed parties with calligraphers coming to your table to script personal messages, foot-massage and even rickshaw rides from the station.

Restaurant: L'Eau-T Cuisine
Cuisine: Modern British
Price Range: £££
Open: Lunch & Dinner every day
Vegetarian Available: Yes, plenty
Address: The Mill Hotel, Milton Street, Chester, CH1 3NF
T: +44 (0) 1244 350035

When you think of Chester, canals don't immediately spring to mind. But after my visit to the Mill Hotel L'Eau-T Cuisine restaurant cruiser, I'd thoroughly recommend this culinary meander along the Shropshire Union Canal, you'll get to see a very different perspective of the historic sights whilst enjoying top quality food.

Prices do vary, from £16 for the lunch cruise to £22-26 for the dinner cruise. I'd suggest booking in advance to make sure that you get the type of cruise you want and at the right time of the day. The boat is pretty special – designed by the hotel owner Mr Vickers (a keen boater himself) just over three years ago – it's a 70ft long, 12ft 8" wide cruiser. It's even big enough to house a bar and a dance floor!

After pre-dinner drinks you move to the boat for your starter. The main course is brought as you pass by the hotel as part of the trip, with desserts, cheese boards and coffee to follow. I chose a very creamy leek and potato soup, complemented by a main course of salmon with a tomato-based sauce, and a selection of vegetables and roast potatoes. My salmon was a generous portion, with plenty of sauce that was really flavoursome. I ended my meal with a slice of French apple tart, served with cream – although custard was available too. There's a varied wine list, and if you fancy something a bit different you could try one of their themed cruises which in the past have included a Moet & Chandon night. If none of this appeals you can always stay on dry land and visit the CAMRA award winning canalside bar with 16 cask ales on offer and watch the boats slip by.

Restaurant: McMonagles Restaurant
Cuisine: Fish & Chips
Price Range: ££
Vegetarian Available: yes
Address: Forth & Clyde Canal, Clydebank, Glasgow, G81 1QA
T: +44 (0) 14 1951 1333

If a hearty dinner is what you are after then head to McMonagles Floating Fish & Chip Restaurant and Take-Away. McMonagles is housed onboard the custom built ship, 'Debra Rose', moored at Clydebank on the Forth & Clyde Canal.

If you are on your own boat you don't even have to moor-up as McMonagles offers a truly ingenious take-away hatch for boaters, opening right onto the water!

When I visited I opted for a table in the restaurant, situated on the upper deck of the ship. Although fish is the obvious choice, the menu offers a wide range of other dishes including pizzas and homemade steak pie.

They also have plenty to keep the kids quite too, with very affordable kids menu, such as fish fingers with chips beans, a soft drink and ice cream for only £2.75.

My freshly filleted haddock was served with chips, bread and butter and a choice of baked beans, mushy or garden peas. The batter was light and crispy, and the chips chunky 'chip-shop' style with generous servings of bread and peas. My portion was big enough to satisfy the hungriest of diners, but if you do have room left, then dessert is of the traditional variety, with grand caramel shortcake and icky sticky toffee pudding on offer.

SAFETY BACKLOG ELIMINATED

March 2004 is set to be a date to go down in waterway history - it's the month when BW will finally have eliminated its backlog of safety-related maintenance works. This is much earlier than it originally planned when the backlog was first identified. By the mid-1990s, years of under funding had left the waterways with serious structural engineering problems. In 1998 it was estimated that around £90 millions-worth was safety-related. Increased government funding and BW's success in generating its earned income has made an accelerated safety programme possible.

However this does not mean the end of maintenance works, or as we like to call them, stoppages. In fact, with an estimated £160 million of statutory arrears still to be completed, it is far from the end.

BW says, if it continues to get support from government and its commercial ventures raise their predicted revenue, then the remaining maintenance works should be eliminated completely by 2012.

Muirtown Locks, Caledonian Canal

Padworth Lock, Kennet & Avon Canal

A SNAPSHOT OF THE FINAL SAFETY-RELATED MAINTENANCE:

Keadby Lock on the South Yorkshire Navigations

The lock walls at Keadby Lock, a river lock between the Stainforth & Keadby Canal and the River Trent, have been progressively getting closer together. In fact the overall width had reduced by 3.5 inches at the floor and over 12 inches at the coping level. This has consequently lifted up the timber floor of the lock. A supporting underground 'cradle' had to be built around the chamber, to help relieve the lock of stresses from the surrounding ground and a piled wall has been built either side and anchored into the bedrock.

Keadby Lock on the South Yorkshire Navigations

English Heritage has been closely involved in this £1.3 million project, as the lock, which was built in 1770, is both Grade I listed and an ancient scheduled monument.

Muirtown Locks, Caledonian Canal

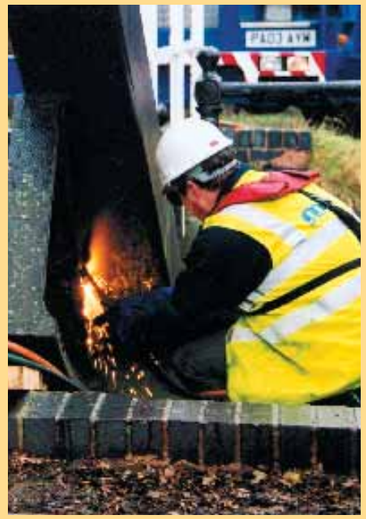
In the early 1990s it was realised that the locks at Muirtown were at a point of collapse and needed urgent repairs. The work at Muirtown locks this winter was at the eighth phase of the ten-stage project. Approximately £2 million was spent to repair a flight of four locks work included stabilising the lock chamber walls and, cill and quoin repairs, as well as stonework repairs and the replacement of the lock gates and walkways.

Padworth Lock, Kennet & Avon Canal

Work was carried out at Padworth lock as part of a campaign to repair all the locks at 'the Thames end' of the Kennet & Avon Canal. The lock had new top and bottom gates fitted and new timber coping was used to replace the old, worn-out brick coping. A new scaffold and ladder system was also used, to help repair the lock. Erected in half-a-day by professional scaffolders, it made getting in and out of the empty lock much easier and much safer for the workforce.

Bridge 28, Stratford-upon-Avon Canal

Bridge 28 is an Oxford style lift bridge. It was proving difficult to move by users, so it was removed to be repaired off-site. With the bridge gone, piling work and repairs to the parapet of the bridge took place. The stoppage took ten weeks and because the bridge is also a right of way and access road, the team constructed a clay track to ensure that customers could still cross the canal and use the towpath throughout the works.



Bridge 28 on the Stratford-upon-Avon Canal

Steer clear of lock gates – give them a longer life!

The odd bash and scrape against lock gates, we all have them, but did you know that over time these scrapes can cause serious damage and cost thousands of pounds?

Not only does scraping cause damage to your boat, it also causes significant harm to the lock gate, which in many cases means a shortened life span and a costly replacement. So to avoid scrapes, and ensure that money is spent where it's really needed, please steer clear of lock gates to give them a longer life.

Shortcuts

STING IN THE TAIL

As soon as she walked into BW's Braunston office to be interviewed for the position of office manager, Julia Moore knew it was the job for her. "I only intended to stay for a couple of years, but I've just celebrated my 10th anniversary!" she laughs.

Following BW's recent restructure, Julia was appointed as customer operations manager for South East waterways, and will be involved in a huge variety of customer-related projects, including moorings, craft licensing, customer facilities and BW's new national initiative to provide dog fouling bins around the network.

"I'll also be helping at Crick Boat Show over the late May Bank Holiday, which I love" she says.

Julia grew up in the farming community at Wilmcote, on the Stratford-upon-Avon Canal, and as a child she always loved walking, fishing and playing on and around the towpath. She also spent a year in Canada on an agricultural exchange scheme, and ended up working on a honey farm in northern Alberta. "It was a fantastic experience, but I never quite got used to being stung," says Julia.

So what has kept Julia at BW for so many years? "I love the variety," she says. "Even after ten years there's still never a day when I don't feel I've learnt something new. I also love meeting and talking to customers, and working with some great colleagues. I get a real buzz when we manage to resolve problems for people."

PEDAL POWER

Until recently, if you'd called BW's Canalphone, you would have heard the voice of Jo Sispera on the other end of the phone. Marketing administrator Jo joined BW in January 2001 to work in the craft licensing department, processing licence and mooring applications and dealing with customer enquiries. She subsequently became a customer service assistant, and then moved into her current position last October.

Working for BW has certainly made an impression on Jo – two years ago she bought a narrowboat, which she's currently restoring, despite having had no knowledge of canals and boating at all when she joined the organisation just 12 months earlier!

"I've not really had the chance to use the boat much yet," says Jo, "but I'm hoping it'll be finished by the summer, and I'd love to live on it eventually."

When she's not in the office, or busy working on her boat, Jo's main passions are mountain biking and travel. She completed last year's London to Brighton bike ride in just six hours.

Before joining BW, Jo spent a year and a half back packing around Australia, New Zealand and America. So, has she finally got rid of the travel bug? "It was a fantastic experience, but I'm quite happy where I am for the time being," she says. "And I really enjoy working for BW. No, I'm definitely not planning on heading off anywhere else just yet!"

THE CUT BOBBY

Colin Cope, patrol and enforcement officer for Wales and Border Counties Waterways likes to refer to himself as a 'Cut Bobby' when he explains his job to groups like the Women's Institute and the Rotary Club. "I regularly do talks for groups of people to promote the waterways and explain my job," says Colin. "Cut Bobby seems the perfect way – I'm your local bobby on the waterways beat."

And Colin has plenty of experience in dealing with people and different situations. "I was a fireman for four years and then a police inspector for 26 years before moving to BW 3½ years ago," explains Colin. "I'm also a wing commander in the Air Training Corp, where I'm responsible for 300 adult staff and 1,200 young people."

When Colin does have some spare time he likes to make full use of the canal. "There is a canal at the bottom of my garden and I've actually owned a boat for five years," says Colin. "That's really how I came to apply for the job."

So what does Colin enjoy about his job? "I like the customer service side of it, dealing with a variety of people with different problems. I know the patch really well now, and I tend to know people by boat name first, then by their name." And what's the best boat name he's seen? "My favourites have to be 'Minesapint' and 'Firkenhall'," he laughs, "they always bring a smile to my face when I pass them by."

CAPITAL LIVING

Commuting in London can be incredibly stressful but waterway operative Mike Wheeler has found the towpath a revelation. "I really enjoy riding my bike along the towpath to work," says Mike, "it's much less stressful."

Mike has always been connected to the waterways, growing up alongside the Grand Union Canal in the Midlands. He always considered living afloat, but his career in computer programming became his main focus.

"I decided that there was more to life than the daily grind of the rat race, and I had already moved onto a narrowboat," explains Mike. "It's a great lifestyle, with a real community spirit, although I'm back on dry land again for the moment"

Now a waterway operative on the Regent's Canal, Mike started on the Lower Lee and was also the lock keeper at Bow Creek, he's currently training to become a multi-skilled waterway operative. "I love everything about the canal," explains Mike. "This job means I can work outside with a great team of people doing something that makes a difference."

Environmental issues are something Mike feels strongly about, along the Regent's he's worked on several projects, including building vegetation rafts, bat boxes and nesting platforms. The success of the work along the stretch has been recognised, and Mike was part of the team winning the BW Commendation Cup for the most improved lock, "It's great when you make a success of your work."

WHEEL GOOD TIME

If you've ever been to The Falkirk Wheel it's likely that customer service and admissions co-ordinator, Laura Caygill, will have had something to do with your visit. Laura joined BW Scotland in January 2002, five months before The Wheel was opened. Laura's first role was events co-ordinator so the Royal opening was a mammoth initial task.

Local girl Laura is particularly proud of The Wheel, "sometimes I can't believe I'm involved in one of the most exciting tourist projects in Scotland," she says.

Of her latest role, Laura says, "I'm essentially a walking information point. I'm face to face with the customers and try to answer all their questions, so I've quickly learnt a lot of facts. I'm also responsible for reading and responding to the comment cards and answering all the email enquiries."
As well as all this Laura continues to organise promotional events as well as undertaking duty manager responsibilities.

One of the key attractions of the job for Laura is the variety. "Everyday is different, I never know what's going to happen or who's going to walk into the visitor centre. Weekends are always very busy and everyone pulls together to make sure visitors enjoy their Wheel experience. It's so nice to see visitors smiling when they walk off the trip boat."

Laura hopes to continue to grow with BW. "I really enjoy working for BW and I've had fantastic training opportunities. I couldn't ask for a better job, I just love it."

Letters

Please send letters to:
The Editor, *Waterfront* Magazine, British Waterways,
Willow Grange, Church Road, Watford WD17 4QA
Email: waterfront@britishwaterways.co.uk

What a truly excellent letter from Brian Mayland in the spring/summer 2003 *Waterfront*. Would it be possible for BW to publish just a small leaflet to explain the mechanics of just why a boat will surge on its moorings? From conversations with other boaters we know we are not alone in our frustration at having others pass us at our moorings, often at full speed. Perhaps a leaflet with simple diagrams and explanations, given out with hire boats and inserted with BW literature could get the message across. No, we are not taking a swipe at hire boats – these days they are some of the most pleasant people you can meet on the canals. As a final comment we have heard it said recently, more than once, that if the present trend for speed continues there could be an argument for naming and shaming those that do. Why not?

Yours sincerely
Liz & John Standring, Yetminster, Dorset

The importance of slowing down to pass moored boats is certainly a point worth re-emphasising. 'The Boater's Handbook', which is freely available from BW's Customer Service Centre does contain information to this effect. We took onboard Brian Mayland's comment (see response to his letter in the last issue of Waterfront) about slowing down before passing other boats when we reprinted the Handbook earlier this year. At the next re-print, we'll consider the diagram suggestion. Hire boat operators undertake to include a copy of the handbook in their onboard manuals, so the message should be getting through to people.

I have read with interest over the last few *Waterfront* publications an ongoing debate over the use of stern lights through tunnels. Would not the use of red LED type rear cycle light help solve several problems? - a) LED's give high visibility over a great distance and b) a red rear light would differentiate between an on-coming boat and a boat in front travelling in the same direction. Many of these bike lights come with some kind of clamp, enabling them to be attached to the tiller, and many have some kind of belt clip, that could allow the light to be fastened to the belt of the boatman, if the tiller was not an option. Keep up the good work.

Mark S Haworth (Bury)

We appreciate Mr Haworth's suggestion about using a red LED lamp (possibly designed for a bicycle) at the stern of a boat when navigating a tunnel. This would not confuse a following boat into thinking there was a boat approaching, and would also limit the amount of light in and around the stern of the boat, helping the steerer to see in the dark.

The Boater's Handbook recommends staying at least two minutes behind any boat that's entered a tunnel in front, which at average cruising speed works out at about 500 feet.

Eugene Baston, customer relations manager, BW

In response to Mr Chaplin's letter (Issue 7), may I point out that a BW licence entitles boat and owner to be and move on the waterways. Moorings are an optional extra paid for by those who require them. What is the rationale for penalising those who use the services to which they are entitled through purchasing a licence?

Many continuously cruising boaters move to the extremities of the system during the summer to allow hirers and holidaying private boaters to speed with impunity, bash into lock gates, drop paddles willy-nilly, plough into the nicely piled towpaths and generally cause wear and tear on the system. In the quieter winter months we venture out more, unfreeze water taps, clear towpaths of fallen trees, report problems to BW and generally contribute to the maintenance of our home and others' play thing.

Stop blaming the continuous cruisers for BW failings. The Trial Moorings Code is irrelevant. Overstaying could be solved by BW exploring the current byelaws, not introducing new, unenforceable draconian ones.

Yours faithfully
Sally Owens

The licence allows a boater to stay in any one place for up to 14 days, unless other restrictions apply at a particular location. For those who genuinely continuously cruise this arrangement works well.

However, many more boaters do not have the opportunity to continuously cruise the network all year round, and so have to leave their boat at a location for more than 14 days, and pay for a mooring to do so. It's understandable that many of these boaters feel it is unfair that others do not pay for a mooring but don't continuously cruise either.

We agree with you that enforcement of BW byelaws is the right way to address the problem of some boaters significantly overstaying at moorings around the network.

Eugene Baston, customer relations manager, BW

Here is a tip that many boaters could benefit from. You know the scene - you are about to raise a paddle, and the other gates are almost closed, well maybe open by a foot or so. So you wind the paddle up, for some reason nothing happens for a few seconds, then suddenly the gates swing shut with an embarrassing crash. Oops! You could of course have walked to the other end of the lock and closed the gates properly, but this isn't always the answer either, because some gates will swing open again. The real secret of closing the gates quietly is very simple. All you need to know is that it takes about ten seconds for the effect of the paddle to reach the other end of the lock. So what you should do is: raise the paddle only a couple of notches, and wait ten seconds. At the end of this time, the other gates will usually shut slowly, firmly and quietly. Then you can raise the paddle fully, as fast as you like. What has this cost you? Ten seconds at most. What have you gained? The satisfaction of operating the lock efficiently and without risk of damaging the gates or anything between them.

Yours faithfully
Emlyn Jones (nb Rameau)

I'm sure many of our readers will find your tip very useful, and anything that avoids unnecessary wear and tear to the canal infrastructure is definitely worth knowing.

I just wanted to comment on the article "This is my Patch" The River Trent. The article is not credited with an author so I do not know who to direct this at. I appreciate that space is limited and that it had to be a short article. What surprised me most was the complete inaccuracy of it. "The old warehouses and buildings alongside the river have been converted into Bars...One bar has an opening onto the river and a narrowboat moored inside."

This stretch of Nottingham is on the canal not the river. Not only does this show to the many boaters who know Nottingham that your author is inaccurate but will also be misleading to any visitors in the future. From any other magazine this would be excusable, but from BW's own *Waterfront* magazine sent to boaters this is poor reporting and proof reading at best.

Yours
P Bateman (Received by email)

We apologise for this unintentional error and hope that it did not spoil other readers' enjoyment of the article.

Earlier this year it was reported in the waterways press that "BW believes that only 1% of boats are not licensed." In March my wife and I travelled on the Grand Union Canal from Stoke Hammond to Stoke Bruerne. Not counting marinas we passed 192 moored boats. Of these, 51 or 26% of the total were not displaying a licence (in itself a contravention of BW byelaws) or had licences that had expired long ago. It was quite apparent to us that 16 (or 8%) had not and clearly had no intention of having a licence (let alone mooring permits). So much for your belief of 1%.

A lot of people struggle with ever increasing costs of boating so that they can enjoy one of life's few pleasures. It is unfair on them and all legitimate boaters that this is allowed to continue at all let alone in such a blatant manner. Why don't BW employ "bailiffs/inspectors" on fixed or short term contracts to eradicate this problem. They would pay for themselves several times over and cure a long running problem.

(Received by email)

The vast majority of boats that appear to be unlicensed are either licensed but not displaying it, or are late payers.

Our enforcement processes involve identifying unlicensed boats and then writing to the owners reminding them of the requirement. Subsequent letters issued to these boat owners explain that licence arrears are due and that if the boat does not become licensed and the arrears settled within a specified time, the boat may be removed from the waterway. The great majority of boat owners acquire a licence during this process.

Regrettably there will always be a small group of owners who remain unlicensed and choose to ignore our letters. These boats are eventually removed from the waterways, either with or without the owner's permission.

Eugene Baston, customer relations manager, BW

The editor reserves the right to shorten or modify any letters submitted.